

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, and the rejection of claims 1, 5, 6 and 8-15 are respectfully requested. Applicant has attempted to address every objection and ground for rejection in the Office Action dated July 1, 2003, which has been made final, and believes the application is now in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal. The claims have been amended to more clearly describe the present invention.

Applicant acknowledges the indication of allowability of claim 7. Accordingly, claim 7 has been canceled and incorporated into claim 1. Also, to promote consistency between the claims, the specification and the drawings, FIG. 5 and associated language in the specification has been revised to support amended claim 1. No new matter has been added. Claims 8-15 have been canceled and will be filed in a co-pending continuation application.

Claims 1, 5, 6 and 8-15 stand rejected under 35 USC §102 as being anticipated by Furr et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,188,356). In view of the incorporation of allowable claim 7 into claim 1, Furr fails to disclose the splint as now recited in amended claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection based on Furr is respectfully traversed.

None of these references, whether cited or of record, taken either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the invention as claimed.

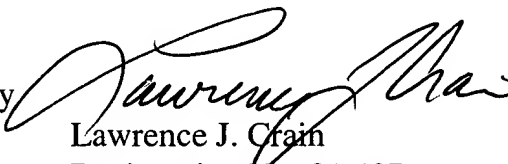
Applicant submits that in view of the above-identified amendments and remarks, the claims in their present form are patentably distinct over the art of record. Allowance of the rejected claims is respectfully requested. Alternatively, the claims are submitted to be in better form for appeal. Should the Examiner discover there are remaining

Appl. No. 09/869,849
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issues which may be resolved by a telephone interview, he is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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